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May 12, 2016

To: Supervisor Hilda L. Solis, Chair  
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From: Philip L. Browning  
Director

**CONCEPT 7 FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW**

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of Concept 7 Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in August 2015. The FFA has two offices, one located in the First Supervisorial District and one office in San Bernardino County and provides services to the County of Los Angeles DCFS placed children. According to the FFA's Program Statement, its stated purpose is, "to provide foster homes for children in need of out-of-home care by training and certifying acceptable foster parents in the counties of Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino and San Diego; to provide social work services and ongoing education and training to foster parents. In addition, to design a treatment program for each foster child that focuses on family reunification. When family reunification is not possible, FFA agency works with the County authorities to develop an alternative treatment/placement program."

The QAR looked at the status of the placed children's safety, permanency and well-being during the most recent 30 days and the FFA's practices and services over the most recent 90 days. The FFA scored at or above the minimum acceptable score in 8 of 9 focus areas: Permanency, Placement Stability, Visitation, Engagement, Service Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork and Tracking & Adjustment. OHCMD noted opportunity for improved performance in the focus area of Safety.

In December 2015, OHCMD Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support to address methods for improvement in the area of Safety. The FFA provided the attached approved Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) addressing the recommendation noted in this report.

*"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"*

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If you have any questions, your staff may contact me or Aldo Marin, Board Relations Manager, at (213) 351-5530.

PLB:KR:KDR:rds

#### Attachments

c: Sachi A. Hamai, Chief Executive Officer  
John Naimo, Auditor-Controller  
Public Information Office  
Audit Committee  
John Peel, Executive Director, Concept 7 Foster Family Agency  
Lajuannah Hills, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division  
Lenora Scott, Regional Manager, Community Care Licensing Division

**CONCEPT 7 FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY  
QUALITY ASSURANCE REVIEW (QAR)  
FISCAL YEAR 2015-2016**

**SCOPE OF REVIEW**

The Out-of-Home Care Management Division (OHCMD) conducted a Quality Assurance Review (QAR) of Concept 7 Foster Family Agency (the FFA) in August 2015. The purpose of the QAR is to assess the FFA's service delivery and to ensure that the FFA is providing children with quality care and services in a safe environment which includes physical care, social and emotional support, education and workforce readiness and other services to protect and enhance their growth and development.

The QAR is an in-depth case review and interview process designed to assess how children and their families are benefiting from services received and how well the services are working. The QAR utilizes a six-point rating scale as a *yardstick* for measuring the situation observed in specific focus areas. The QAR assessed the following focus areas:

**Status Indicators:**

- Safety
- Permanency
- Placement Stability
- Visitation

**Practice Indicators:**

- Engagement
- Service Needs
- Assessment & Linkages
- Teamwork
- Tracking & Adjustment

For Status Indicators, the QAR focuses on the child's functioning during the most recent 30-day period and for Practice Indicators, the QAR focuses on the FFA's service delivery during the most recent 90-day period.

For the purpose of this QAR, interviews were conducted with three focus children, three Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Children's Social Workers (CSWs), three FFA staff members and three certified foster parents.

At the time of the QAR, the FFA supervised 180 DCFS placed children in 111 certified foster homes. The focus children's average number of placements was four, their overall average length of placement was 17 months and their average age was 12. The focus children were randomly selected. None of the focus children were included as part of the sample for the Contract Administration Division's (CAD's) 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review.

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**QAR SCORING**

The FFA received a score for each focus area based on information gathered from on-site visits, agency file reviews, DCFS court reports and updated case plans, and interviews with the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, service providers and the focus children. The minimum acceptable score is 6 in the area of Safety and 5 in all remaining areas.

Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
<b>Safety</b> - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children are free of abuse, neglect and exploitation by others in his/her placement and other settings.	6	5 - Good Safety Status	The focus children have a generally and substantially safe living situation with reliable and competent caregivers who protect the focus children well under usual daily conditions. Protective strategies are generally operative and dependable.
<b>Permanency</b> - The degree to which the focus children are living with certified foster parents, who are likely to remain in this role until the focus children reach adulthood, or the focus children are in the process of returning home or transitioning to a permanent home and the focus children, the FFA staff, certified foster parents, DCFS CSWs and if applicable, Department of Probation Officers (DPOs) support the plan.	5	5 - Good Status	The focus children have substantial permanence. The focus children live in a family setting that the focus children, FFA staff, caregivers and team members have confidence will endure lifelong.
<b>Placement Stability</b> - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents ensure that the focus children's daily living, learning and work arrangements are stable and free from risk of disruptions. Known risks are being managed to achieve stability and reduce the probability of future disruptions.	5	6 - Optimal Stability	The focus children have optimal stability in placement settings and enjoy positive and enduring relationships with primary caregivers, key adult supporters and peers. There is no history of instability over the past 30 days.

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Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
<b>Visitation</b> - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents support maintaining important connections with significant family members/Non-Related Extended Family Members (NREFMs) through appropriate visitation and other means.	5	5 - Substantially Acceptable Maintenance of Visitation & Connections	Generally effective family connections are being sought for all significant family members/NREFMs through appropriate visits and other connecting strategies. All appropriate family members/NREFMs have regular visits.
<b>Engagement</b> - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents working with the focus children, their family members/NREFMs and other team members for the purpose of building a genuine, trusting and collaborative working relationship with the ability to concentrate on the focus children's strengths and needs.	5	5 - Good Engagement Efforts	To a strong degree, a rapport has been developed, such that the FFA staff, DCFS CSWs, DPOs (if applicable), caregivers and the focus children feel heard and respected. Reports indicate that good, consistent efforts are being used.
<b>Service Needs</b> - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children work toward ensuring the focus children's needs are met and identified services are being implemented and supported and are specifically tailored to meet the focus children's unique needs.	5	5 - Good Supports and Services	A good and substantial array of supports and services substantially matches intervention strategies identified in the focus children's case plans. The services are generally helping the focus children make progress toward planned outcomes.

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Focus Area	Minimum Acceptable Score	FFA QAR Score	FFA QAR Rating
<b>Assessment &amp; Linkages</b> - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs understand the focus children's strengths, needs, preferences and underlying needs and services provided are regularly assessed to ensure progress is being made toward case plan goals.	5	5 - Good Assessment and Understanding	The focus children's functioning and support systems are generally understood. Information necessary to understand the focus children's strengths, needs and preferences is frequently updated.
<b>Teamwork</b> - The degree to which the "right people" for the focus children and their family members/NREFMs, have formed a working team that meets, talks and/or makes plans together.	5	5 - Good Teamwork	The team contains most of the important supporters and decision-makers in the focus children's lives, including informal supports. The team has formed a good, dependable working system that meets, talks and/or plans together.
<b>Tracking &amp; Adjustment</b> - The degree to which the FFA staff and certified foster parents involved with the focus children and their family members/NREFMs are carefully tracking the progress that the focus children are making, changing family circumstances, attainment of goals and planned outcomes.	5	5 - Good Tracking and Adjustment Process	Intervention strategies, supports and services being provided to the focus children are generally responsive to changing conditions. Frequent monitoring, tracking and communication of the focus children's status is occurring.

OHCMMD conducted the last QAR of the FFA in October 2014 and noted an opportunity for improvement in the focus area of Safety. In February 2015, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support to address methods for improvement in this area. Based on the information below, although the FFA showed improvement in the area of Safety on their 2015-2016 QAR, there is still an opportunity for improvement in this area.

**STATUS INDICATORS**  
*(Measured over last 30 days)*

Status Indicators	Safety	Permanency	Placement Stability	Visitation
2014-2015 Scores	4	5	6	6
2015-2016 Scores	5	5	6	5

In the area of Safety, OHCMD found that the FFA had partially implemented their 2014-2015 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) to address child safety related concerns involving placed children who present with emotional and behavioral difficulties by providing the FFA social workers with training on caring for children with special needs. The interviewed focus children reported that they feel safe, comfortable and respected by their certified foster parents and the DCFS CSWs for the focus children reported there were no safety issues or concerns. However, the FFA scored below the minimum acceptable score in the area of Safety, as there appears to be a need for the FFA to enhance strategies developed to ensure placed children are appropriately supervised and that there is a decrease in minor accidental injuries.

In the area of Permanency, the FFA provided good permanence for the focus children. The FFA makes efforts to collaborate with the DCFS CSWs and the focus children to assist in the determination of the best permanency plan. The permanency plan for all three focus children is Planned Permanent Living Arrangement. Two of the certified foster families are interested in pursuing legal guardianship of the focus children in their care. The third focus child is not interested in adoption or legal guardianship at this time, as she is unsure of what she wants. Her certified foster parent respects the focus child's decision and remains supportive. The focus child's certified foster mother is assisting her in becoming self-sufficient by providing life skills and teaching her to perform chores such as cooking and keeping her room clean as she may be interested in becoming independent and transitioning out of care to transitional housing.

In the area of Placement Stability, the FFA continues to provide optimal stability for the focus children. The focus children have a positive, enduring relationship with their certified foster parents. The FFA ensures the focus children receive treatment and services needed for them to remain stable in all areas. One focus child reported that she has formed a good, supportive relationship with her certified foster parents and they are meeting her needs. The second focus child reported that she likes her certified foster family and she would like to continue living with them as long as possible. She shared that initially she avoided interaction with her certified foster parents and the other children in the home. She would isolate herself by pulling her hair over her face and wearing all black. However, with the love, care and support of her certified foster parents and the other children placed in the home, her relationship has improved. She reported that she feels relaxed and enjoys participating in activities with her foster family. The third focus child stated that she has become part of the family and she shared that she played a major role in assisting her certified foster mother's daughter plan her wedding. The DCFS CSWs reported that they have a great rapport with

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the FFA social workers and they work together to make sure the focus children's placements are stable. The DCFS CSWs all agree that the focus children will remain with their current caregivers and there is little likelihood of future disruptions at home or in their school setting.

In the area of Visitation, the FFA provided generally effective family connections for the focus children. Two focus children participate in regular visits with their family members and/or NREFMs. The focus children reported enjoying and looking forward to their visits with the family members and/or NREFMs. The third focus child has monitored visits with her mother in a therapeutic setting due to her mother's mental health issues. Her Wraparound team is supportive of her visits with her mother and is willing to monitor her visits. However, the focus child is refusing to visit her mother at this time. The FFA staff and her certified foster parents respect her decision. The focus child is addressing this in therapy and the FFA is working on identifying mentoring services.

**PRACTICE INDICATORS**  
*(Measured over last 90 days)*

Practice Indicators	Engagement	Service Needs	Assessment & Linkages	Teamwork	Tracking & Adjustment
2014-2015 Scores	5	5	5	5	5
2015-2016 Scores	5	5	5	5	5

In the areas of Engagement, Services Needs, Assessment & Linkages, Teamwork and Tracking & Adjustment, the FFA continues to make good efforts in engaging the focus children and key people in decisions that are being made on their behalf. The focus children reported that their concerns and needs were heard and respected. There continues to be a good array of supports and services that fully match intervention strategies identified for the focus children. For example, one focus child reported that her certified foster mother communicates her needs to her Court-Appointed Special Advocate who has been instrumental in ensuring that her needs are being met. She further stated that through this support system, she is able to remain stable in her current placement and focus on her studies. The second focus child stated that the FFA social worker and her certified foster parents work diligently with her DCFS CSW to ensure she makes progress towards her treatment goals. The third focus child reported that she could confide in various team members to give her support. She reported that she is extremely happy that her certified foster mother has exposed her to many new experiences that have enriched her life, such as enrolling her in summer camps and taking her and the other placed children on a cruise to Mexico.

Intervention strategies, supports and services provided to the focus children and their family members are generally responsive to changing conditions. The FFA works toward ensuring the focus children's needs are met and that identified services are being implemented as



stated in their case plan. The FFA social worker also ensures that they make every effort possible to coordinate their visit to the certified foster home with the DCFS CSWs' visit. The FFA social worker also meets weekly with the certified foster parents and the focus children or more often as necessary to address the focus children's progress towards their treatment goals and address any concerns. This information is shared with the focus children's DCFS CSWs. The DCFS CSWs reported that they have built a good rapport with the FFA social workers and certified foster parents and they communicate regularly.

### **NEXT STEPS TO SUSTAIN SUCCESS AND OVERCOME CURRENT CHALLENGES**

In March 2016, OHCMD provided the FFA with technical support related to the CAD's 2015-2016 Contract Compliance Review findings in the areas of Licensure/Contract Requirements, Maintenance of Required Documentation and Service Delivery and Personnel Records. Technical support was provided on how the FFA can ensure Special Incident Reports are submitted timely and properly cross-reported to all required parties; compliance with Title 22 Regulations to remain free from Community Care Licensing citations; timely obtaining the DCFS CSW's signature authorizing implementation of the Needs and Services Plans (NSPs); engaging certified foster parents to participate in the development of the NSPs and ensuring FFA staff receive required annual training.

In December 2015, the Quality Assurance Reviewer met with the FFA to discuss the results of the QAR and to provide the FFA with technical support addressing methods on improving in the area of Safety. The FFA submitted the attached approved QIP. OHCMD Quality Assurance staff will continue to provide ongoing technical support, training and consultation to assist the FFA in implementing their QIP.